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# **Risk, trust, gender and transnational cousin marriage among British Pakistanis.**

## ***Abstract***

The substantial numbers of incoming spousal migrants from Pakistan is a notable feature of contemporary British immigration. This article argues for the utility of viewing such marriages, which are commonly between cousins, not only in terms of migration strategies or kinship obligations, but as part of the negotiation of the risks of marriage in a transnational context. Focussing on matches between British women and men from Pakistan, it explores conceptualisations of marriage and risk, relatedness and place, and closeness and distance, to explain the appeal of transnational close kin marriage. But whilst these arrangements hope to reduce some risks, they also produce others, generated both by the incentives of migration, and by internal logics of marriages between relatives. Marital choices among British Pakistanis, and resulting migration, can thus be seen as a consequence of a culturally-grounded dialogue on risk and how best it can be managed.

**Keywords:** Migration, Transnational, Marriage, Risk, Trust, Kinship

British Pakistanis commonly marry Pakistani nationals, who then normally migrate to join their spouse in the UK. The limited statistics available suggest that the majority of British Pakistanis are probably marrying transnationally in this way, and that the majority of these transnational marriages are between kin – commonly first or second cousins (Shaw 2001). Indeed, in contrast to the expectations of some commentators (e.g. Shaw 1988) and the hopes of the Home Office set out in the 2002 immigration White Paper, the proportions of such close kin transnational marriage seem to have been on the rise in recent years (Shaw 2001). Such marriages have usually been interpreted in strategic terms, representing a means to circumvent increasingly restrictive immigration regulations, fulfil obligations to kin and demonstrate the solidarity of the extended family. These considerations are weighed against potential benefits of other possible matches (Ballard 1987; 1990; 2001.; Shaw 1988; 2000, cf. Donnan 1988). Whilst kinship obligations and strategic considerations play important roles, they do not entirely explain the enduring, and it seems increasing, popularity among British Pakistanis of contracting marriages with relatives raised in Pakistan.<sup>1</sup>

This article, based on 18 months of qualitative research in Pakistan and with people of largely Punjabi origin in the English city of Bristol, will suggest that a focus on risk, and specifically on a culturally-grounded and gendered understanding of risk, has an important role to play in understanding this migration trend. The discussion will concentrate in particular on marriages between British Pakistani women and Pakistani men, as the numbers of husbands entering Britain have increased since the abolition of the Primary Purpose Rule in 1997 removed the ability of immigration officials to reject

applications on the basis of a belief that the 'primary purpose' of the marriage was economic migration.<sup>2</sup>

## **Risk**

The problem of risk has been seen as characteristic of late modernity. Beck, for example, argues that contemporary resource overproduction has replaced the problem of fulfilling basic human needs with risks accompanying new technologies. Hazards have always existed, but he suggests that these were visible in the past, whilst the risks of late modernity are more unknown (1992: 19-21). For Giddens, risk is essentially a feature of modern society 'taking leave of the past, of traditional ways of doing things... opening itself up to a problematic future' (1991: 109). Elsewhere Giddens consigns arranged marriages to the category of 'traditional' past-oriented societies (1999), but this work on transnational cousin marriage demonstrates the role of risk in understanding what is often seen as an archetype of tradition. Much risk literature, with its focus on the state, corporations or the environment, has little to say about such small-scale negotiations of risks.

The anthropologist Mary Douglas suggests an alternative approach: situating risks in their social and moral environment (Douglas & Wildavsky 1983; Douglas 1992). The risks each society singles out for particular attention are seen as indicative of its values and must be understood in the context of wider social structure. This brand of 'cultural theory' postulates a typology of societies building on Douglas' 'grid' and 'group' classifications, by which risk and responses to risk can be understood. Perhaps the most useful aspect of

Douglas' work is the fundamental point that people do not treat risk as a matter of calculable probabilities. Rather risk is a social matter. Risks are normally not taken in isolation, but after consultation with friends and relatives, and taking moral obligations, values, and relationships into account (cf. contributions to Caplan 2002). Such work is in sharp contrast to the universalising theories of a global 'risk society'. Here I argue for recontextualising risk in cultural understandings and small-scale interactions between individuals (cf. Luker 1975; Bujra 2000), in order explore the appeal of transnational kin marriage for some contemporary British Pakistani families.<sup>3</sup>

### **Risk, gender and marriage**

Arranging a marriage carries risks for the families involved: the choice of one prospective spouse over another can cause bad feelings, and while a good match brings benefits in terms of *izzat* (honour/prestige/status) or social networks, a poor or failed marriage can be socially damaging (cf. Fischer 2001). The marriage of a daughter is considered particularly difficult. The literature on South Asia stresses the financial burden of marrying a daughter, providing a dowry she will take to another household, but for Pakistani mothers in Bristol, it is the danger of causing their daughter difficulties and unhappiness by an unwise choice that is of most concern. In Pakistan and North India, brides traditionally move to their in-law's household. Their resulting vulnerability is suggested by the traditional attempt to divine whether the mother-in-law will love the bride by the strength of colour given by the henna patterns piped onto her hands. Although women importing husband do not live with their in-laws, this

conceptual vulnerability remains, and stories also circulate in Bristol of husbands who use drugs, are violent, have left their wives, or contracted second marriages.<sup>4</sup>

Women for whom marriages are arranged with Pakistani nationals are subject to two further types of risk: the rejection of a visa application leaving the bride an ‘immigration widow’ (Menski 2002); or the husband exploiting a marriage as a migration opportunity, intending to leave their wife once they obtain the right to remain in the country (Werbner 2002). Whilst the former danger may be reduced now husbands are more likely to be granted visas, there may be more opportunity for the latter, a prospect that worries many women.

Moreover, if the marriage does end in divorce, suspicion that the wife has caused the problem may contribute to the difficulty for women to re-marry (cf. Jeffery 2001). If a second husband can be found, his motivations for accepting a divorcee might be suspect, and his willingness to accept any children from the first marriage doubted. Hafza, who endured years of verbal and physical abuse before leaving her husband, said she had seen one man – ‘*bas!*’ (enough/stop). Nighat, a Mirpuri woman whose husband left her and her daughters for his girlfriend, attempted to commit suicide rather than face life as a divorced woman. It is no wonder, then, that parents of girls are described as *majbūr* (helpless; oppressed; in need) in the matter of arranging marriage, with the knowledge that if it goes wrong, their daughter is likely to come off worse.

For this reason, as many people have told me, ‘if a good *rishta* [connection of blood or marriage, in this context proposal of marriage] comes [for a girl], you take it.’

Unlike out-marrying Sikhs and Hindus, Pakistani Muslims have the option of choosing a match from among close kin. The following sections will examine why this may present as an appealingly safe choice in this context.

### **Trust and the nature of kin**

My informants, who include both marriage arrangers and those for whom marriages are arranged, do not themselves explicitly employ the concept of risk, but their narratives frequently dwell on the dangers or security of various marital situations. Ghalib, for example, married into Britain in 1976. He explained the risk he would be taking if he found *rishte* for his children outside the family:

I'm a really very open-minded person... but I must admit my weakness. I'm still stuck in that family resistance [i.e. tied to the idea of marriage within the kin group]... I don't know why, but it's just in my mind. I think if I stick in my family it will be better than if I go out. And that's only a fear. And that fear is I don't know what they will be...

The most common reason given for marrying close kin is that they are known and so whether they would make a good match, and whether the husband and in-laws will treat a daughter well, can be more effectively judged.<sup>5</sup> The need for knowledge of the spouse's nature is particularly important in transnational marriages, with the fear that Pakistani spouses may just be 'marrying a passport', or that British Pakistanis who have grown up in the decadent West may indulge in unacceptable behaviour such as alcohol use or premarital liaisons. Marrying within the family provides trusted referees in mutual kin to advise on the

character of the proposed spouse and their family. In other words, risk is managed through trust based on the bonds of kinship.<sup>6</sup>

The ‘nature’ of close kin is also thought more likely to be similar. Fischer and Lyon suggest that Pakistani understandings of similarity between kin contributes to the statistical preference they found in Lahore for marriage between same-sex siblings’ children. Brothers, they write, ‘are more like each other than they are like their sisters, and *vice versa*’. Similarity travels down the generations, so the children of same-sex siblings are likely to be most alike from the pool of available first cousins (2002: 305). Although girls are told from a young age of the need to ‘adjust’ and compromise in marriage, parents hope that similarities will ensure the couple’s compatibility, and therefore their children’s future happiness.

Mines, writing of Muslims in South India, suggests that endogamy is based not on notions of substance (as is the conventional anthropological explanation), but on the desirability of spouses sharing ‘the same economic backgrounds and the same cultural and, especially, religious traditions’ (1978: 164). Family cultures or lifestyles thought to be closer should help the couple to adapt to their in-law’s ways more easily, and the two families to get along. Relatives, even separated by migration, are also likely to have met on visits and family functions, providing opportunities to assess each other’s suitability as spouses or in-laws.

### **Degrees of Relatedness**

Similarity and compatibility between the couple is not simply due to sharing substance: the being ‘of one blood’ attributed to all members of the *barādarī* kin



group. Ties of kinship are also created, as Carsten demonstrates for the ‘process of kinship’ in Malaysia, where marriage, feeding and exchange create and maintain bonds of relatedness (1997).

Among Pakistanis in Britain, gift giving has been documented as one way in which social ties are formed and continued, creating what Pnina Werbner has called a ‘hierarchy of exchange’. Criticising studies of British South Asians that overemphasise kinship at the expense of friendship (Werbner 1990: 174), she postulates a single scale of increasing ‘value, exclusivity and trust’ linking categories of neighbours, work-mates, business associates, close friends, kinsmen and close kinsmen (Werbner 1990: 221) in a ‘friendship-cum-kinship network’ (Werbner 1990: 128, cf. Baumann 1995). Just as friendships are made through exchange and unmade through quarrelling or refusing gifts, kinship relations can be created or weakened through marriage or residential proximity, which sustain or neglect connections (Donnan 1988). Geographical distance mediates ‘closeness’ between kin in purely genealogical terms, through opportunities for visiting and the promotion of familiarity, so that a first cousin in the same city in Britain will often be considered ‘closer’ than another living in Pakistan.

Werbner (1990) also notes distinctions within the category of kin: the *ghar* (literally house, meaning extended family), close kinsmen, and kinsmen. Kinship, to make a rather weak pun, is evidently relative. In discussing marriages, my informants make clear distinctions between close kin (usually first or second cousins) and more distant relatives (e.g. *dur se* – far). Where a relationship is distant and complicated, or the exact connection between husband and wife unclear, they might be described as ‘just *barādarī*’. The closer the relative, the more secure the knowledge about the potential spouse, and so the

safer the marriage is considered to be. In theory, then, a match with a close friend's child might be preferable in terms of security to one with a distant relative.

In practice, however, other factors might deter matches with non-kin. Some elders insist on marriage within the family. In Bristol, one man's father threatened to cut him off financially and did not speak to him for months until he abandoned his planned 'love marriage' and accepted a match with a relative. Some will accept marriages out of *zāt* (caste) but may, as Punjabis, object to a Mirpuri spouse, or *vice versa*. For others, the boundary is the ethnic group: another father who has accepted that his children will marry out of *barādarī* told his daughter she could not marry an Indian Muslim because the wider family would not accept it. 'Some people are brave,' he said, 'but I won't allow my children'.

In his well-known ethnography of Southhall, Baumann has documented the commonalities that transcend ethnicity (1996), and most young Bristol Pakistanis have White, Afro-Caribbean, Indian and Bangladeshi friends, but marriage is another matter. Although many younger people appeal to the laws of Islam to argue that the limit should be religion, most families would object to a marriage with a non-Pakistani.<sup>7</sup> In addition to concerns with cultural reproduction, shared ethnicity also provides a basis for trust. There is a general sense that 'relations between Pakistanis are underpinned by a set of shared cultural premises' such that *kameti* rotating credit schemes, for example, can operate on trust (Werbner 1990: 71). This ethnic bond of cultural morality should extend to marriage – when Sumera's husband married again, she complained that

although she knew Pakistani men used white women to gain visas, she hadn't expected him to do it to 'one of his own'.

Rayner (1992) suggests that people deal with risk not as the standard calculation of 'probability x consequences', but are concerned with 'fairness', rooted in considerations of 'trust', 'liability' and 'consent'. Kin links provide the basis for all three – trust based on moral obligations and similarity between kin, networks along which marriages can be negotiated, and group sanctions to hold a transgressing spouse to account. Harriss' (2003) account bases formulations of trust on specific or general character assessments, experience, or institutions such as societal norms. Close kin marriages, I suggest, are felt by many of my informants to promise solid and multiple routes to trust. Specific knowledge of the character of a close relative is cemented by trust in the commonalities felt to exist between kin and co-ethnics. The success of other relatives' close kin marriages may further increase confidence in this type of arrangement, whilst the values of kin solidarity and mutual obligation provide a further basis for trust.

The literature on trust, like that on risk, tends to focus on organisational or citizen-state relations, and on the question of the 'modernity' of the concept. Seligman (1997), for example, writes that trust is not an issue in pre-modern societies governed by strict norms of status or kinship behaviour, but becomes a serious problem with which complex, market-oriented, individualistic modern states must grapple.<sup>8</sup> Again, the emphasis is often on variation in trust between societies with different social organisations (e.g. Fukuyama 1995). One angle on the betrayals perceived by British Pakistanis such as Sumera is to question whether her husband in fact felt that his wife was 'one of his own'. Ethnicity, it has often been noted, is contextual. The security of kin marriage relies heavily on

commonalities and a shared identity: in Mary Douglas' terms, on the assumption of strong 'group'. Moreover, ethnicity has a dual nature – the identity a group claims for itself, and that attributed to them by others. It seems that the assessments of transnational ethnic unity, or even kin-based solidarity, relied upon by some of my informants in Britain for the purpose of arranging marriages may not be shared by all Pakistani immigrant spouses. The converse may be also true of cases in which Pakistani spouses are mistreated or abandoned by British relatives with whom they have contracted marriages.

Knowledge and trust are crucial in arranging marriages, not only in assessing matters that may affect the future happiness of a son or daughter, but also in predicting dowry and other demands (cf. Ahmad 1978: 175-6; Jeffery & Jeffery 1996: 98-9). The additional distance involved in transnational marriage carries the potential to increase such risks, facilitating, for example, the concealment of rumoured or actual love affairs (cf. Shaw 1988: 175). In this sense, migration has introduced additional risk by undermining the trust based on knowledge of one's kin.

For some, these risks are too great, particularly for women – so Ghalib, for example, who married his son to a cousin from Pakistan, has decided that when it comes to his daughter, he will search for a husband in Britain. Nonetheless, this section has suggested that the concern to reduce risk plays an important role in Bristol Pakistanis' frequent choices of relatives as spouses for their children.

## Closeness and distance

Thus far, the discussion has focused on similarity between spouses, but affinity 'is always a precarious balance between too much and too little closeness' (Carsten 1997: 191). Again, geographical, emotional and genealogical proximity combine in creating what is thought of as 'too close', just as they create distance that is held to entail risk. Among Muslims in North India, for example, Jeffery and Jeffery write of the need to balance the physical distance between a girl's natal and marital homes carefully. The parental bond must be adequately broken to avoid interference in the daughter's married life, but if a marriage is arranged too far away, then kin are physically missing and emotionally missed (1996: 216-7). One mother in Bristol, for example, said that she would prefer to find a *rishta* for her daughter outside Bristol. Whilst she would love to keep her daughter close, if she lived nearby the danger of interfering and exacerbating any marital problems would be too great.<sup>9</sup>

Environment is also thought to influence character. Here, too, there may be too much similarity, as I have heard marriages between two British-raised people described as unlikely to succeed because they will both be too strong-willed. The implication is that in marriage it is necessary for at least one party to compromise, and some view young women raised in Britain as less likely to 'adjust' as girls are traditionally advised. Residence in Britain can thus be viewed as eroding gendered difference, damaging the complementarity between husband and wife, and leading to potential conflict.

Some have doubts over the suitability of potential spouses brought up in Britain, particularly given the cultural and religious reproduction implied by marriage and childbearing. A spouse from Pakistan may be considered more religious, or more traditional, bringing another element of difference that will benefit both the marital relationship, and children born of it (cf. Constable 2005). Wasim told me at length about what he saw as the failings of the local Pakistani community – the proliferation of mobile phones leading to illicit communication between the sexes, and fathers who neglect their children’s moral development to work long hours in shops or taxis. Aware of his own lack of religious practice and knowledge, he hoped that his Pakistani wife would be able to teach their children about Islam. He also hinted at the perceived benefits in terms of domestic power relationships that a ‘simple’ wife might bring when he asked her only to address him in Urdu so that she would use the respectful ‘*āp*’, similar to the French ‘vous’, a distinction unavailable in English. Several young women expressed parallel concerns over the suitability of local young men as husbands – suggesting that British Pakistani boys were lacking in terms of work ethic, religious practice or values.

Asma suggested that she knew her British cousin ‘too well’ to marry him, attributing this to the linkages between residential proximity, association, and emotional closeness suggested above: ‘I’ve lived with him, went to nursery with him, school with him. He’s like your brother and you’re like, “Yeuch [noise of disgust], I don’t want to marry you!”’ This sentiment may even be extended to unrelated men living locally, so that one young woman explained that she would not like to marry a boy from Bristol as she would ‘know too much about him’.

Within networks of kin and locality, it seems that some distance is needed to create space for a marital relationship.

Less frequently-encountered cousins living in Pakistan may not seem so problematically ‘close’, although some young people retain an uneasiness about the situation. Saif worried about both genealogical closeness and generational difference in his marriage:

I wasn’t sure whether it was legal or not, but they convinced me. I was a bit wary. I mean cousin’s quite close in itself, but cousin’s daughter – I think it’s even worse. It sounds even worse when you explain it to people. If they understand the generation gap and the number of years between us – nine years between us. I guess you can get away with it, but it’s still a bit scary. ‘Cos it’s my, my two brothers – their two wives, [are] Aisha’s eldest sisters. Sorry – I even get confused by that. My elder brothers... their wives are the sisters of Aisha’s mother... Yeah, Aisha’s aunties.

Nevertheless, many British Pakistanis agree to marriages to cousins in Pakistan rather than Britain. In this, we can see a double influence of transnationalism: bringing exposure to conflicting ideas about the suitability of cousins as spouses, whilst providing relatives who are close enough in genealogical terms to generate social approval and trust, but whose physical distance can render them more acceptable as marriage partners. So Leyla’s mother said that her daughter made it clear that her relatives in Britain,

were more like cousins and brothers rather than to see them in that sort of light... Whereas because they were in Pakistan, we didn’t see [Leyla’s cousin/fiancé] that often. It just seems more of a – kids find it easier. It does

happen here, kids marry cousins here as well, but with my kids that's how it was.

### **Reproducing Risk: Dangers of the 'double rishta'**

The existence of a network of mutual kin should provide both support for the couple, and a powerful disincentive against divorce. Arranged marriage in general is often contrasted to 'love marriage' on these grounds – that a couple who make their own choice to marry will have made their bed and must lie on it, but if families have arranged a match, they will be more supportive in case of marital difficulty. Arranged kin marriages, it is hoped, are thus doubly unlikely to end in divorce. This safeguard does not appear to be infallible, however. Indeed, a common complaint from women is that their husband's family take his side in disputes, making the conflict worse.

Although one intention of a kin marriage may be to strengthen family ties, if conflict does occur between husband and wife, and particularly if they divorce, wider relationships may become embroiled in the dispute (cf. Carsten 1997). This is a result of what some called the 'double *rishta*' - a relationship of both consanguinity and marriage, which has the potential to fragment allegiances within the kingroup. The breakdown of a transnational marriage can be particularly serious, occasionally involving deportation, and for Pakistani women the choice of returning to bring shame and financial burden on their family, or remaining in Britain with limited support networks. For British Pakistani women, obtaining a divorce from a religious marriage carried out in Pakistan can be a lengthy and complicated matter (Shah-Kazemi 2001).



Refusing a proposal can also cause conflict, so one woman who came to Bristol as a fiancée twenty years before said that she did not really want to come to the UK, but her sister's husband's brothers were all fighting over her hand. To avoid causing disputes by marrying one and rejecting the others, she accepted a proposal from abroad. Fear of being blamed for rifts in the family may also have the unintended consequence of undermining the reliability of mutual kin as referees for the character of transnational matches.

In light of these dangers, Shareen, a young woman from Bristol married to a cousin from Pakistan, complained that it was a pity her husband was an only son, 'because I would have asked my sisters to marry my husband's brothers. Then they could have been my sisters-in-law!' Not only would this provide husbands from a tried and tested source, but would negate some of the difficulties of the double *rishta*, as her sisters-in-law (her sisters) would be allies rather than potential rivals. However, for a parent, putting all your marriage eggs in one basket removes the possibility of compensating for rejecting a *rishta* from one side with the marriage of a subsequent child. Bushra's husband's brother's wife in Pakistan was worried about broaching the idea of marriages between her son and daughter, and Bushra's two children.

I think she thought that by taking both my children, you know, my sisters might not feel good about that.... when you're in our families, when you've got your husband's side and then your side, there's a lot of problems sometimes where your sister wants your daughter's hand in marriage and your husband's sister as well – your sister-in-law. And there's always problems and your husband might side with their sisters, say they want your daughter to be married on that side...

This kind of marriage represents in effect an exchange of opposite-sex siblings, a practice known as *watta-satta* (cf. Eglar 1960, Wakil 1991, Alavi 1972), meaning giving and taking. This arrangement may reduce the costs of marriage as dowry expectations will be low (Eglar 1960; Wakil 1991). It is also intended to provide security against marital collapse. But for many women I know in Bristol, *watta-satta* epitomises the dangers of the double *rishta*. Some told me that that only a few families kept up this ‘village custom’, although Bushra is from an educated urban background. Most agreed that it carries dangers, running the risk of direct revenge being taken on your daughter should your son’s marriage run into difficulty. So another woman in Bristol praised a male relative as ‘really good’ for staying with his wife, despite the fact that her brother had divorced his sister. For many, *watta-satta* represents the point where the balance shifts in the risks and benefits of close kin marriage; where an attempt to reduce dangers by marrying close kin ends up producing other equally serious risks. Rifts within the family are a hazard of all unsuccessful consanguineous marriages, but in *watta-satta* each side has a the potential to inflict a direct blow to the other’s family honour, and cause suffering to a daughter of the other’s house.<sup>10</sup>

## Conclusion

This article has suggested that interpretations of British Pakistani marriage choices must incorporate understandings of the role of risk, and that concern to protect against the dangers inherent to marriage should be given a more prominent position in analyses. Shaw has suggested that discourses concerning

the daughter's best interests are 'rationalisations', 'best regarded as symbols of the values of "real" or "fictive" kinship solidarity' (2000: 158). Such marriages undoubtedly have a symbolic function as public representations of the trust between kin. However, the material presented here demonstrates the value of making space for issues of risk alongside pragmatic considerations in interpreting the popularity of transnational marriage between kin.

Close kin transnational marriage is here presented as one attempt to contain the hazards involved in both migration and marriage. In the dialogic process of selecting and managing risks (Douglas & Wildavsky 1983; Douglas 1992; Charsley forthcoming), Adams (1995) points to what he calls the 'cultural filters' through which information on risks and benefits are understood, and which produce a cultural bias towards certain responses. This paper has outlined aspects of British Pakistani conceptions of relatedness, and the dangers and benefits of selecting spouses from Britain or Pakistan. Although the mechanical metaphor of cultural filters inserted into a flow chart of rational decision-making has its drawbacks, the perspective outlined here points to multiple reasons for the current appeal of close kin transnational marriages, as a response to the various risk involved in choosing a spouse.<sup>11</sup>

The interactions between risk, relatedness and transnationalism in this context are multiple. British Pakistanis may find Pakistani spouses preferable to locals because of doubts over the character of British-raised young people, or because they perceive local cousins as too close to marry. Transnational marriage, however, introduces the danger that Pakistani spouses' commitment may not extend beyond immigration and settlement, reinforcing the appeal of the security of a *rishta* with a trusted relative. But as we have seen, other risks are

intrinsic to close kin marriage. The over-layering of affinity and consanguinity involved is intended to promote good relationships by removing conflicts of interests, but some types of double *rishta* are seen as particularly prone to the danger that difficulties within one marriage will spread to the wider kin group. Continuing transnational cousin marriage suggests that for many British Pakistanis, the balance of these risks remains in favour of the choice of cousins from Pakistan as marriage partners, but it remains to be seen how these interconnected dialogues of risk, distance and marriage practices will develop in subsequent generations.

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## Notes

1. Exploring the minority practice of forced marriage is beyond the scope of this paper.
2. Seen as discriminating against arranged marriages (Menski 1999).
3. The topic of genetic risks to children born of consanguinous marriage is dealt with elsewhere (Shaw 2000b, 2001 & 2003), and was not critically important in the vast majority of marriages encountered (see Charsley 2003).
4. For an exploration of various possible risks for others involved in transnational marriages see Charsley 2006b.
5. In Pakistani fiction, non-kin matches are often disastrous. In one case described by Das, an outspoken wife dragged her husband to England, where he contracted tuberculosis (1973: 36)
6. Compare Caplan (2002) on willingness to eat British beef during the BSE crisis, where trust was based on ‘knowledge’ grounded in locality – knowing the locals who raised and sold the meat.
7. See Charsley 2003 for an example of one woman’s creative solution to this situation.
8. One might argue with the implicit portrayal of members of ‘traditional’ or ‘pre-modern’ societies as norm-bound automata with unitary roles and transparent social relations.
9. See Charsley 2005 on migrant husbands in this situation.
10. Same sex sibling pairings are considered ideal, however, leading to harmony with spouses’ siblings’ spouses, and no conflict between matrilineal and patrilineal first cousin unions in the following generation (Das 1973) – a double reduction of the double rishta’s potential for conflict. *Watta-satta* on the other hand, represents a complication rather than simplification of kinship corporate interests, as affinity and consanguinity entangle in a dangerously unstable web where delicate connections may be torn apart by these opposing forces.
11. Elsewhere I have examined another form of risk management in the delaying of consummation until after husbands’ successful migration to Britain (Charsley 2006a).

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